

Russian energy production and the devastating national security consequences of being economically dependent on our adversaries.

The threats to our economic security are numerous and growing and cannot be overstated. The peace and prosperity of our country is at risk.

We saw the first inklings of this threat at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when the U.S. could not find enough personal protective equipment for its hospitals and medical providers, and China threatened our security by imposing export restrictions on masks and ventilator components, preventing U.S. companies from getting the deliveries they needed from their own subsidiaries.

This was just the tip of the iceberg. We know that China is working hard to expand its global economic reach in a variety of ways.

A report by the DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council correctly stated that: “DHS has no choice but to play a larger role in economic security issues. It is charged with preparing for all manner of crises . . . from major hurricanes to terrorist attacks.”

The report also highlighted the threat that China poses, and it stated that these new, long-term threats are economic, and the new weapons are trade deals, technological innovation, and critical supply chain dependencies.

The U.S.-China strategic competition is increasingly driven by who controls these underlying systems and the rules by which we advance our economic interests. We cannot allow ourselves to be behind the curve in the next national or global disaster. We need to get ahead of it.

To that end, the report made two recommendations on how the Department can combat China's influence while also contributing to our economic security.

First, the report concluded that to keep the civilian side of our economy functioning in a time of crisis, Congress should institutionalize a politically appointed official to conduct day-to-day policy coordination and who resides within the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans. This bill codifies such an assistant secretary position in that office.

Second, the report recommended that DHS institutionalize a council that would identify concentrated economic risks, set priorities, and coordinate enterprise-wide action on economic security matters. This bill follows that recommendation by establishing the DHS Trade and Economic Security Council while also defining its roles and responsibilities.

Codifying these important facets of the Department is a critical step to ensuring our economic security. The work that this council and the assistant secretary will do is critically important to the Nation's response and resilience to the next unforeseen global crisis.

It is crucial that DHS lean into its unique position as the only executive

agency that deals with both the national security and economic prosperity of the Nation and lead the United States Government as the pre-eminent economic security agency in the decades to come.

I am proud to have led this important and timely effort. I thank my friend and colleague, Ranking Member KATKO, for being an original cosponsor, and I also thank Representatives LURIA, DELGADO, and SLOTKIN, in particular, for reaching across the aisle.

Economic security is truly homeland security. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to vote for this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted America's economic security and exposed supply chain vulnerabilities.

As a proud New Jerseyan, I would like to acknowledge the yeoman's work the Port of New York and New Jersey, the largest container port on the East Coast, has done during the pandemic to meet the demands of the growth in e-commerce and move cargo into our communities in a timely way.

As our economy continues to recover, H.R. 4476 will help ensure that DHS is well-positioned to proactively address potential threats and vulnerabilities that could be exploited by adversaries or exacerbated.

I thank my colleagues on the Homeland Security Committee for unanimously supporting H.R. 4476, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4476, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

RESILIENT ASSISTANCE FOR MITIGATION FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION BY AMERICANS ACT

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5689) to improve the provision of Federal resources to help build capacity and fund risk-reducing, cost-effective mitigation projects for eligible

State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments and certain private nonprofit organizations, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5689

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Resilient Assistance for Mitigation for Environmentally Resilient Infrastructure and Construction by Americans Act” or the “Resilient AMERICA Act”.

SEC. 2. PREDISASTER HAZARD MITIGATION.

Section 203(i) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) is amended by striking “equal to 6 percent” and inserting “equal to not more than 15 percent”.

SEC. 3. NONPROFIT FACILITIES.

Section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b) by striking “and local governments” and inserting “, local governments, and private nonprofit facilities”;

(2) in subsection (c) by striking “or local government” in each place it appears and inserting “, local government, or private nonprofit facility”;

(3) in subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A) by striking “local governments” and inserting “local governments and private nonprofit facilities”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by striking “local governments” in each place it appears and inserting “local governments or private nonprofit facilities”; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B) by striking “local government” and inserting “local government or private nonprofit facility”; and

(C) in paragraph (3) by inserting “or private nonprofit facilities” after “any local governments of the State”.

(4) in subsection (e)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A) by striking “and local governments” and inserting “, local governments, and private nonprofit facilities”; and

(B) in paragraph (2) by striking “or local government” in each place it appears and inserting “, local government, or private nonprofit facility”;

(5) in subsection (f)—

(A) in paragraph (2) by inserting “or private nonprofit facilities located in the State” after “local governments of the State”; and

(B) in paragraph (3)(A) by inserting “or private nonprofit facilities located in the State” after “local governments of a State”; and

(6) in subsection (g) by striking “or local government” in each place it appears and inserting “, local government, or private nonprofit facility”.

SEC. 4. BUILDING CODE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT SET ASIDE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 203(f) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(m)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) BUILDING CODE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT SET-ASIDE.—Of the amounts made available under this section for any given year, the Administrator may use not less than 10 percent to carry out eligible activities that further the implementation and enforcement of the latest published editions

of relevant consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards, including any amendments made by State, local, Tribal, or territorial governments to such codes, specifications, and standards, that incorporate the latest hazard-resistant designs and establish minimum acceptable criteria for the design, construction, and maintenance of facilities and residential structures that may be eligible for assistance under this Act. In any fiscal year in which requests for assistance for such activities do not total at least 10 percent of assistance under this section, any remaining funds may be used as additional assistance for the purposes of paragraph (1)."

(b) **LATEST PUBLISHED EDITIONS.**—Section 203(m) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133(m)) is amended by inserting ", (f)(3)," after "subsections (e)(1)(B)(iv)".

(c) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 1234 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (42 U.S.C. 5133 note) is amended by striking subsection (d).

SEC. 5. RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE.

(a) **USE OF ASSISTANCE.**—Subsection (g) of section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170(c)(g)) (as redesignated by section 2) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (12)—

(A) by inserting ", wildfire, and ice storm" after "windstorm";

(B) by striking "including replacing" and inserting the following: "including—

"(A) replacing";

(C) in subparagraph (A) (as so designated)—

(i) by inserting ", wildfire," after "extreme wind"; and

(ii) by adding "and" after the semicolon at the end; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

"(B) the installation of fire-resistant wires and infrastructure and the undergrounding of wires;"

(2) in paragraph (13) by striking "and"; and

(3) by striking paragraph (14) and inserting the following:

"(14) replacing water systems that have been burned, caused contamination, or are at risk from wildfire impacts with resilient, non-combustible materials;

"(15) repairing, replacing, or retrofitting infrastructure damaged by ice storms to be resilient to the impacts of such storms;

"(16) retrofitting or hardening electric grid infrastructure to comply with the latest published strength standards or industry best practices for resiliency, including standards and practices relating to the strength of utility poles in high wind areas, regardless of height; and

"(17) implementing technologies to improve infrastructure monitoring and distribution for the purpose of reducing risk and avoiding future disaster impacts and, notwithstanding other requirements related to cost-effectiveness, to avoid any unintended consequences under this section and section 203."

(b) **USE OF ASSISTANCE FOR EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS.**—Subsection (h) of section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170(c)(h)) (as redesignated by section 2) is amended—

(1) by inserting "and tsunami" after "earthquake" each place it appears (including in the subsection heading);

(2) in paragraph (2) by striking "and" at the end;

(3) in paragraph (3) by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

"(4) planning, design, or construction of vertical evacuation structures in designated and mapped tsunami danger areas or hazard zones."

SEC. 6. RESIDENTIAL RETROFIT AND RESILIENCE PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall carry out a residential resilience pilot program through the program established under section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) to make available assistance to State and local governments for the purpose of providing grants to individuals for residential resilience retrofits.

(b) **AMOUNT OF FUNDS.**—The Administrator may use not more than 10 percent of the assistance made available to applicants on an annual basis under section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) to provide assistance under this section.

(c) **TIMELINE.**—The Administrator shall establish the demonstration program under this section not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and the program shall terminate on September 30, 2025.

(d) **REPORT.**—Not later than 4 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report that includes—

(1) a summary of the grant awards and projects carried out under this section;

(2) a detailed compilation of results achieved by the grant awards and projects carried out under this section, including the number of homes receiving retrofits, the types and average costs of retrofits, demographic information for participants in the program, and estimate avoidance in disaster impacts and Federal disaster payments as a result of the grant investments; and

(3) any identified implementation challenges and recommendations for improvements to the pilot program.

(e) **RESIDENTIAL RESILIENT RETROFITS DEFINED.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In this section, the term "residential resilient retrofits" means a project that—

(A) is designed to increase the resilience of an existing home or residence using mitigation measures which the administrator determines reduce damage and impacts from natural disaster hazards and risks that are most likely to occur in the area where the home is located; and

(B) to the extent applicable, are consistent with the 2 most recently published editions of relevant consensus-based codes, specifications, and standards, including any amendments made by State, local, tribal, or territorial governments to such codes, specifications, and standards that incorporate the latest hazard-resistant designs and establish criteria for the design, construction, and maintenance of residential structures and facilities that may be eligible for assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) for the purpose of protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of the buildings' users against disasters.

(2) **INCLUSION.**—In this section, the term "residential resilient retrofits" includes—

(A) elevations of homes and elevations of utilities within and around structures to mitigate damages;

(B) floodproofing measures;

(C) the construction of tornado safe rooms;

(D) seismic retrofits;

(E) wildfire retrofit and mitigation measures;

(F) wind retrofits, including roof replacements, hurricane straps, and tie-downs; and

(G) any other measures that meet the requirements of paragraph (1), as determined by the Administrator.

SEC. 7. BUY AMERICA FOR NONEMERGENCY PROJECTS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—For the purposes of this rulemaking, to ensure that the United States has the productive capability to respond quickly to emergencies and natural disasters with a strong domestic industrial base being in the public interest, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall require, as a condition of any financial assistance provided by the Agency on a nonemergency basis after promulgation of regulations pursuant to subsection (c) for a construction project with a cost of at least \$1,000,000, that the steel and iron used in the project be produced in the United States.

(b) **WAIVER.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator may provide a waiver of the requirements in subsection (a) if the Administrator finds—

(A) that the application of such subsection would be inconsistent with the public interest, including causing unreasonable project delays;

(B) that such steel and iron are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities and of a satisfactory quality; or

(C) that inclusion of domestic material will increase the cost of the overall project contract by more than 25 percent.

(2) **PUBLIC INPUT.**—If the Administrator receives a request for a waiver under this subsection, the Administrator shall make available to the public, on an informal basis, a copy of the request and information available to the Administrator concerning the request, and shall allow for informal public input on the request for at least 15 days prior to making a finding based on the request.

(3) **PUBLICATION OF REQUEST.**—The Administrator shall make the request and accompanying information available by electronic means, including on the official public website of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(c) **RULEMAKING.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the President, acting through the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, shall conduct and complete a rulemaking to establish what considerations shall be used by the Administrator to assess whether a waiver request made pursuant to subsection (b)(1)(A) is in the public interest. Such criteria shall include both a calculation considering domestically produced steel and iron and a calculation with non-domestically produced steel and iron for construction projects which require a Benefit-Cost Analysis in order to qualify for financial assistance.

(d) **ADJUSTMENT.**—The amount in subsection (a) shall be adjusted annually to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Department of Labor.

SEC. 8. REIMBURSEMENT OF INTEREST PAYMENTS RELATED TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 431. REIMBURSEMENT OF INTEREST PAYMENTS RELATED TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

"(a) **IN GENERAL.**—For purposes of assistance under this title, the President shall provide financial assistance at the applicable Federal share to a State or local government, electric cooperative, or nonprofit organization as reimbursement for qualifying interest.

"(b) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section, the following definitions apply:

“(1) **QUALIFYING INTEREST.**—The term ‘qualifying interest’ means, with respect to a qualifying loan, the lesser of—

“(A) the actual interest paid to a lender for such qualifying loan; and

“(B) the interest that would have been paid to a lender if such qualifying loan had an interest rate equal to the prime rate most recently published on the Federal Reserve Statistical Release on selected interest rates.

“(2) **QUALIFYING LOAN.**—The term ‘qualifying loan’ means a loan—

“(A) obtained by a State or local government, electric cooperative, or nonprofit organization; and

“(B) of which not less than 90 percent of the proceeds are used to fund activities for which such State or local government, electric cooperative, or nonprofit organization receives assistance under this Act after the date on which such loan is disbursed.”.

(b) **RULE OF APPLICABILITY.**—Any qualifying interest (as such term is defined in section 431 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as added by this section) incurred by a State or local government, electric cooperative, or nonprofit organization in the 5 years preceding the date of enactment of this Act shall be treated as eligible for financial assistance for purposes of such section 431.

SEC. 9. FUNDING OF A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.

Section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133) is further amended by adding at the end the following:

“(n) **FUNDING OF A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Notwithstanding section 312 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5155) and its implementing regulations, assistance provided under this section may be used to fund activities authorized for construction within the scope of a federally authorized water resources development project of the Army Corps of Engineers if such activities are also eligible activities under this section.

“(2) **FEDERAL FUNDING.**—All Federal funding provided pursuant to this section shall be applied toward the Federal share of a federally authorized water resources development project described in paragraph (1).

“(3) **NON-FEDERAL MATCH.**—All non-Federal matching funds required pursuant to this section shall be applied toward the non-Federal share of a federally authorized water resources development project described in paragraph (1).

“(4) **TOTAL FEDERAL SHARE.**—Funding provided pursuant to this section may not exceed the total Federal share for a federally authorized water resources development project described in paragraph (1).

“(5) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this subsection may be construed to affect—

“(A) the cost-share requirement of a hazard mitigation measure under this section;

“(B) the eligibility criteria for a hazard mitigation measure under this section;

“(C) the cost share requirements of a federally authorized water resources development project described in paragraph (1); and

“(D) the responsibilities of a non-Federal interest with respect to such project, including those related to the provision of lands, easements, rights-of-way, dredge material disposal areas, and necessary relocations.

“(6) **LIMITATION.**—If a federally authorized water resources development project of the Army Corps of Engineers is constructed with funding provided under this subsection, no further Federal funding shall be provided for construction of such a project.”.

SEC. 10. GAO REPORT TO CONGRESS ON CHALLENGES UNDER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study on the challenges to States and Territories of the United States in obtaining assistance under section 428 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189f).

(b) **CONTENTS.**—In conducting the study described in subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall study the challenges for assistance described in subsection (a) faced by the following:

(1) Rural areas, as such term is defined in section 423 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189a).

(2) Small impoverished communities, as such term is defined in section 203 of such Act.

(3) Other communities, areas, or individuals that the Comptroller General determines pertinent.

(c) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report describing the results of the study required under subsection (a).

SEC. 11. APPLICABILITY.

The amendments made by sections 2, 4(a), 8, and 9, and the provisions under section 6, shall only apply to amounts appropriated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5689, as amended.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5689, the Resilient AMERICA Act. This bill reflects a bipartisan agreement that will significantly enhance U.S. mitigation and resilience efforts.

Federal policy that focuses on investment in mitigation and bolstering resilience is basic good governance and will lessen the impacts of future disasters. For years, studies have demonstrated that taxpayers save up to \$11 for every single dollar invested in mitigation before a disaster strikes. There is no better investment.

This legislation builds on existing mitigation efforts and will make our Nation more resilient.

First, this legislation increases the amount of mitigation funding FEMA may make available to States through the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, also known as BRIC, and makes nonprofits eligible recipients of these funds.

Second, it expands the kind of projects eligible for mitigation assist-

ance through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. This includes enhancing the resilience of utilities to risks from wildfire, which will be of great benefit in the Western States.

Third, this legislation sets aside funds for the implementation and enforcement of the latest building codes and standards. Building codes make our buildings safer and more resilient. Proper building codes that account for climate change can mean the difference between saving a family's home and a total loss during a disaster. I strongly support efforts to prepare buildings for actual hazard risks and climate change with updated codes.

Lastly, this legislation creates a pilot program to fund resilience projects at private homes. Often, homeowners cannot implement recommended mitigation efforts, such as creating defensible space to protect against wildfires or removing overhanging branches to remove the risk of damage from severe storms, because they are too expensive.

This pilot program will create the first Federal grant program that allows homeowners to proactively take mitigation into their own hands. I am confident that empowering individuals through this program will make families and their homes more resilient and, again, in the end, save taxpayers money.

Representing a district that was impacted by catastrophic wildfires, particularly in 2020, has made me painfully aware of the importance of the provisions within this legislation. I wish that this bill and the mitigation investments it authorizes could have been enacted prior to the 2020 fires. It may have saved some of my constituents from the trauma of losing their homes.

I thank Ranking Member GRAVES, as well as Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Chair TITUS and Ranking Member WEBSTER for their support and for working with us on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides to join us and support the Resilient AMERICA Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to cosponsor H.R. 5689, the Resilient AMERICA Act, along with Chairman DEFAZIO and Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Chair TITUS and Ranking Member WEBSTER. This bill is going to strengthen our support for communities and individuals in mitigating disasters.

We know that for every dollar invested upfront in mitigation, \$4 to \$11 are saved in damages from a disaster. Given that, one way we lower costs of future disasters is by investing upfront in mitigation.

This bill builds on the bipartisan work that we did on mitigation in the

Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018. It ensures mitigation funds are spent and targeted in ways to support efforts by communities and homeowners to save lives and reduce damage.

In my district, my constituents regularly experience flooding that not only causes damage to homes and businesses but disrupts lives and displaces people. Sadly, the time it takes to recover and receive assistance is far too long.

I am glad to see more being done to make commonsense investments on the front end through mitigation projects, which will save taxpayers money. More importantly, it can help save lives.

This bill also has the support of several groups, including the National Association of Home Builders.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter of support from the National Association of Home Builders.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, April 5, 2022.

Hon. PETER DEFAZIO,
Chairman, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SAM GRAVES,
Ranking Member, House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN DEFAZIO AND RANKING MEMBER GRAVES: On behalf of the more than 140,000 members of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), I write in support of H.R. 5689, the Resilient AMERICA Act. The resilience and pre-disaster mitigation initiatives contained in this bipartisan bill would provide a comprehensive and preemptive approach to reducing the risks of natural disasters while preserving important flexibilities at the state and local levels.

NAHB supports a comprehensive approach to addressing natural disasters through initiatives focused on implementing cost-effective solutions that encourage greater resiliency in the nation's housing stock—while preserving housing affordability. The Resilient AMERICA Act would invest in commonsense mitigation activities, with an emphasis on residential retrofits for improving resiliency in older homes. Expanding mitigation opportunities and creating incentives to facilitate upgrades and improvements to older homes and structures would help to reduce risks and minimize losses from future catastrophes.

NAHB also supports the incorporation of language that respects state and local jurisdictions' control over building code adoption by providing flexibility to adopt one of the two latest published codes. In addition, the bill includes a provision that would provide consistency in how FEMA evaluates which code a jurisdiction has adopted. This language will provide the flexibility needed for communities to take positive steps to withstand and recover from extreme events.

We urge the passage of H.R. 5689 to make American communities more resilient while also protecting important building code flexibilities at the state and local levels.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

JAMES W. TOBIN III,
Executive Vice President & Chief Lobbyist.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman DEFAZIO for working with us on this bill as we have all seen the effects of disaster in our districts and across America.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this bipartisan legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD two letters of support for H.R. 5689, one from the Build Strong Coalition and one from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

BUILDSTRONG COALITION,
Washington, DC, March 1, 2022.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Minority Leader, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. DINA TITUS,
Subcommittee Chair, House T&I Committee, Washington, DC.

Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER,
Subcommittee Ranking Member, House T&I Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI AND LEADER MCCARTHY: The BuildStrong Coalition writes to express our strong support for H.R. 5689, the Resilient Assistance for Mitigation for Environmentally Resilient Infrastructure and Construction by Americans (AMERICA) Act, which was passed out of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on October 27, 2021, with almost unanimous backing. The undersigned organizations, as part of the BuildStrong Coalition, urge you to schedule consideration of the bipartisan legislation on the House floor as soon as possible.

This legislation builds on the resilience initiatives contained in the bipartisan infrastructure package and provides additional tools for families, businesses, and communities to reduce climate risks ahead of the next crisis. As our nation's disaster profile becomes increasingly volatile and the instances of severe climate events grow, it is critical that Congress act on this issue.

Important mitigation measures like those included in the Resilient AMERICA Act save lives, property, and taxpayer money, and are crucial for reducing environmental disaster impacts. Multiple studies have demonstrated that for every \$1 spent on preventative pre-disaster mitigation and resilient construction, there is a return of as much as \$11 in savings. Such policies are good for the environment and the economy.

This comprehensive bill contains a host of provisions designed to create a significant number of new resources for communities to better protect themselves ahead of natural catastrophes. This includes policies that would increase funding for the National Public Infrastructure Pre-Disaster Mitigation fund (commonly known as Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC, Program) created by the Disaster Recovery Reform Act to provide grants to local governments for risk-reducing mitigation projects that make homes and infrastructure more resilient in advance of severe climate events, as well as those that would harden communities by creating new resources and incentives for states and localities to adopt and enforce modern constructions standards and building codes. Importantly, the bill will also establish a new pilot program under the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide resources to communities and homeowners for the purpose of retrofitting existing homes and buildings.

The BuildStrong Coalition, formed in 2011 to respond to an increasing number of severe disasters, is made up of a diverse group of members representing firefighters, emergency responders, emergency managers, insurers, engineers, architects, contractors, and manufacturers, as well as consumer organizations, code specialists, and many others committed to building a more disaster

resilient nation. The BuildStrong Coalition has been a partner to Congress's work to investigate causes of, and devise the solutions to, the rising costs and impacts of disasters in the United States.

Our organization represents the broad, bipartisan, public-private, and nonprofit stakeholder support for H.R. 5689. Therefore, the BuildStrong Coalition and its allied partners again ask that it be brought to House floor for consideration under suspension of the rules. We look forward to working with you and are prepared to offer our institutional expertise throughout the process.

Sincerely,
NATALIE F. ENCLADE, PH.D.,
Executive Director, BuildStrong Coalition.

DECEMBER 22, 2021.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Republican Leader, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI AND LEADER MCCARTHY: The undersigned organizations support H.R. 5689, the "Resilient Assistance for Mitigation for Environmentally Resilient Infrastructure and Construction by Americans Act" or "Resilient AMERICA Act," and urge you to schedule consideration of this legislation, perhaps under suspension of the rules. This legislation, which was reported from the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with strong bipartisan support, would build on the resilience initiatives contained in the recent bipartisan infrastructure law and provide additional tools to reduce risks posed by a changing climate.

For every dollar invested in resilience and pre-disaster mitigation, the taxpayer receives anywhere from \$3.00 to \$11.00 in return. Such policies are good for the environment and the economy. This bill would:

Increase the annual spending for the new National Public Infrastructure Pre-disaster Mitigation fund from up to 6% to up to 15% of postdisaster funding.

Require unspent funds to be recaptured for mitigation and resilience projects.

Extend eligibility for Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program grant funding to private non-profit organizations.

Provide a 10% set-aside within BRIC to enforce the adoption of newer building codes.

Add wildfires and tsunamis, including strengthening utilities against wind, ice, and wildfire risks as eligible hazards to receive funding.

Establish a 10% set-aside within BRIC to fund residential resilience retrofit grants—upgrades to strengthen homes resilience and comply with consensus-based codes and standards, including wind and roof retrofits, floodproofing, and constructing saferooms.

We strongly support H.R. 5689 and urge that it be brought to the House floor for expeditious consideration. We stand ready to assist you in this process.

Sincerely,

American Council of Engineering Companies, American Institute of Architect, American Planning Association, American Society of Civil Engineers; American Society of Landscape Architects; Build Strong Coalition; City Parks Alliance; Ecological Restoration Business Association; Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative; National Association of Clean Water Agencies; National Association of Counties; National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies; National League of Cities; National Recreation and Park Association; National Rural Electric Cooperative Association; Rural Community Assistance Partnership; U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. TITUS).

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I stand to add my voice to the bipartisan chorus of support for this bill, including the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Mr. DEFAZIO; Ranking Member GRAVES; and the ranking member of my subcommittee, Mr. WEBSTER, for leading on this bill and working so hard to bring relief to not only our communities but individuals who are hit by natural disasters and other calamities like we saw during COVID.

Creating a Federal policy that supports projects focused on mitigating risks and bolstering resilience is good government. There is no two ways about it.

□ 1330

This legislation features a number of key provisions that will make our Nation more resilient:

One, it increases State funding for predisaster mitigation. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

It expands assistance for Western States, like Nevada, that are at the risk of wildfires, which we see coming more often, lasting longer, and being more intense.

It also reserves funds to implement and enforce the latest building codes and standards so when we do build back, we build back better, not to the status quo ante.

It empowers families to proactively take mitigation measures into their own hands, because they may know best what they need there at home.

I strongly support this legislation. We must wake up to the realities of climate change and the increasing intensity and cost of the natural disasters that it causes. This legislation will help to make our Nation more resilient, and I ask my colleagues to support it.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Aviation.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, today we spend an average of \$100 billion a year responding to disasters; \$100 billion. This is a number that we can't afford to continue responding, continue reacting to disasters.

The National Institute of Building Sciences has done all sorts of analyses looking at the efficacy of making investments on the front end, Mr. Speaker, so we are not in a situation where, as in the chairman's case, we are having to go into Oregon, Washington, California, or other States out West, and pick up the pieces of these communities destroyed by forest fires; so we don't have to go into these communities that have been impacted by severe winter storms, communities living along rivers that have been inundated by floods, or communities on the southern coast, the Gulf Coast, or the

East Coast that have been pummeled by hurricanes, such as our home State of Louisiana, with just in recent years, Hurricanes Laura, Delta, Zeta, Ida; some of the most powerful hurricanes to ever make landfall in the United States.

The National Institute of Building Sciences has found that for every \$1 you invest in natural mitigation solutions, you get up to \$13 in savings. By adopting more resilient building standards, building codes, you get up to \$11 in savings.

Let me say it again, Mr. Speaker. We can't afford to keep doing this. \$100 billion a year. As Ranking Member GRAVES noted a few minutes ago, back in 2018 we worked on a bipartisan basis to, actually, enact the BRIC program, to really take the PDM, the Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant program, and put it on steroids. Based on the incredible popularity of the program, the progress that has been made, this legislation helps to advance it even further. By increasing the funds that are available and, most importantly, by eating into that \$100 billion we are spending in taxpayer funds every year responding to disasters, reducing that cost, Mr. Speaker, and the most important thing is the actual impact on the ground.

Those communities out West that are dealing with forest fires, helping to stop, prevent, and contain those forest fires.

Those communities that are experiencing devastation from winter storms, helping to protect and make them more resilient.

Communities that are getting repetitive floods, making sure those communities can withstand those floods, and those communities that we represent in south Louisiana that have had hurricane after hurricane that are truly challenging the existence, the livelihood of those communities, helping to make sure they can withstand these storms, and we can continue to live life and enjoy life in coastal communities like south Louisiana.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman DEFAZIO and Chairwoman TITUS, Ranking Member GRAVES, and Ranking Member WEBSTER.

We were able to include two amendments in here. Number one, we worked with Congressman DUNN on a very important amendment. Right now, FEMA takes so long to reimburse communities in the aftermath of a disaster, in many cases our parishes, our counties, and States have to take out loans, so there is an amendment added to this bill that mandates that FEMA pay the interest costs of the loan. If they are going to take forever to reimburse, they can at least cover the loan costs, the interest costs on the loan.

The second one is a government efficiency provision. Right now, the Corps of Engineers has the most arduous process in the Federal Government for developing projects, including cost-to-benefit ratios, environmental analysis,

and technical feasibility, yet under current law, Corps of Engineers' projects are prohibited from receiving funds under the BRIC program or PDM. This fixes it. If that is the best solution, if that is the greatest cost savings, if it is the best efficiency of the dollar, my goodness, we shouldn't be stopping it, we should be incentivizing it.

I want to thank all the folks who worked together on this legislation. I look forward to enactment. I urge adoption of the bill.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA).

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Ranking Member GRAVES yielding me the time on this as well as the bipartisan effort with Chairman DEFAZIO and everybody on this important legislation.

The Resilient AMERICA Act really, indeed, is like the old adage, a stitch in time saves nine. When you can spend dollars upfront mitigating, such as this bill moves to do, to make a larger pool of money available under FEMA to do so, it just saves a lot of extra pain and suffering.

Mr. GARRET GRAVES talked about the \$100 billion year in, year out we are spending on disaster relief. It is good we do so, but we can nip a lot of this in the bud by applying this type of thinking toward all types of possible disasters.

In my home district, you know, last year the Dixie fire, right at a million acres; the Camp fire before that hit the town of Paradise. You all heard about that in the news, 85 people lost their lives, destroyed 90 percent of the town. Now, if we can get ahead of the curve on this, whatever is applicable for FEMA preassistance, prework, hardening power lines, having buildings that can be hardened with the right materials for their siding and for their roofs. The mitigation we need to be doing in forested areas, whatever is applicable, the more we can do, the better off we are.

We are also looking at flood situations. I have that, too, with the Sacramento River and Feather River in my area, as well as lesser areas, too, in size. Instead of fixing a levee on New Year's Eve in the middle of the night on soggy levees, doing that work ahead of time, upgrading them makes it safer for the workers, safer for the community, and is much less expensive.

This is, indeed, a great success for us in this time, and there is sometimes difficulty here in Congress to have legislation like this with strong bipartisan support that can help everybody. I am proud of the work this committee has been able to do.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the Resilient AMERICA Act does support the communities by investing in premitigation efforts, and these efforts are going to save lives. It is going to save taxpayer dollars by lowering costs of future disasters. It is going to do so many things.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this important piece of legislation. I again want to thank the chairman for working with us on this. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

We have just heard very telling testimony from the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) about the issues with the frequent problems they have had with hurricanes down there, and then the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) talking about wildfires, which have become more and more intense and widespread and persistent in the West.

On both sides of the aisle, I think almost any Member who has had a disaster, a natural disaster in their district, can attest to the fact that if his or her community had been better prepared, if they had taken steps toward resilience, if the Federal Government had given them that guidance and perhaps some funding incentives to put in place those mitigation measures, that lives would have been saved, property would have been saved, and ultimately the Federal taxpayers would save a lot of money.

This legislation has tremendous merit, and I urge my colleagues to support it unanimously; although, of course, we will have someone on that side of the aisle who will call for a vote even though they might even vote for it. Hopefully, the Senate, in its total dysfunction, will look favorably upon this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5641, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

SMALL PROJECT EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DISASTER RECOVERY ACT

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5641) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to increase the

threshold for eligibility for assistance under sections 403, 406, 407, and 502 of such Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5641

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Small Project Efficient and Effective Disaster Recovery Act” or the “SPEED Recovery Act”.

SEC. 2. SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 422 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5189) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a) by striking “\$35,000” each place it appears and inserting “\$1,000,000”; and

(2) in subsection (b)(3)—

(A) in the heading by inserting “AND REPORT” after “REVIEW”; and

(B) by inserting “and submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report regarding such review, including any recommendations developed pursuant to such review” after “under this section”.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any amounts appropriated after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5641, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5641, the SPEED Recovery Act. This bill will expedite the approval process for FEMA’s small projects within the public assistance program.

The public assistance process is often slow and impeded by bureaucratic red tape, so FEMA offers a simplified approval procedure for small projects that cost \$139,000 or less. When this program was implemented over 40 years ago, it was intended to capture 95 percent of public assistance project worksheets. There has been a little inflation since then.

Today, as we noted earlier, many disasters are more widespread and more expensive. Today only 75 percent of projects are being captured by the \$139,000 threshold. This legislation will ensure that, once again, 95 percent of project worksheets are eligible for expedited review by raising the qualifying project threshold to \$1 million.

By updating the threshold for what qualifies as a small project, barriers to relief and recovery will be alleviated and so will the time it takes communities to get back on their feet post-disaster, and it will allow the limited staff at FEMA to turn their attention to more difficult, expensive, and problematic programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join with me and support this legislation. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to sponsor H.R. 5641, the SPEED Recovery Act. It is a bipartisan bill that cuts red tape and helps expedite disaster recovery efforts, especially in small and rural areas that we have throughout the country.

This legislation updates the threshold of what FEMA considers a small project. It updates it to \$1 million under the Stafford Act; \$1 million under the Stafford Act. This is the first statutory adjustment under the Stafford Act for inflation and rising repair costs in nearly three decades.

Historically, small projects have accounted for about 95 percent of all the recovery projects, but the prolonged failure to increase the cost threshold now means that 25 percent of these projects no longer qualify as small projects. That puts a huge burden on small rural communities that simply don’t have the same kind of resources to deal with the bureaucracy at FEMA. For places like Craig, Missouri, or Brunswick, Missouri, both of which got hammered by the flood of 2019, it has meant more delays and headaches just trying to get the help that they need to recover and to rebuild.

Updating the small project threshold is going to allow these communities to have more control over their disaster recovery efforts and to allow FEMA to focus more of their time and resources on larger and much more complex projects, which represent 90 percent of all disaster costs.

After hearing directly from the communities in my district about the paperwork burdens and the increasing denials over technicalities, my hope is that this commonsense adjustment to the small project threshold is going to improve the process and speed up recoveries for many, many of our communities. We have also received a lot of support for this bill from emergency managers themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a joint letter of support from the National Emergency Management Association, the Big City Emergency Managers, and the International Association of Emergency Managers.